

of Expression does not quite succeed in conveying how exciting this work is. Jenkins relays the flavour of the Caribbean literary scene with great panache

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warp and weft of connections it makes both within Caribbean literature and between the old world and the new.

Erik Martiny

Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster, eds. *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. Pp. xv, 312. \$70.20 cloth.

The time has come, editors Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster say, “to listen to the authentic literary voice of the child” (1). And so the contributors to this volume set out to consider the “non-canonical” writings by children who later became, for the most part, canonical writers. Sixteen chapters—the first an introduction and the last an annotated bibliography of nineteenth-century juvenilia—survey the territory and scrutinize a few famous cases. The famous cases, who provide the focus, are Jane Austen, the Brontës, Byron, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot, John Ruskin, Louisa May Alcott, Mary Augustus Ward, and Amy Levy. Other juveniles considered in the opening survey chapters include Lewis Carroll, Robert Louis Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling, Virginia Woolf, Opal Whiteley, and Iris Vaughan. In every case, with the exception of Daisy Ashford, the juvenile develops into a professional writer, and for the most part, into a famous professional writer. Obviously, the editors had to place restrictions on what they included in their study, and their choice was to remain close to the hundred years between 1800 and 1900, to include writing completed before a person’s twenty-first year, and to centre on the work of writers who are recognized for their adult achievements. This is fine, but as Peterson and Robertson wonder in their opening remarks to the annotated bibliography (Chapter 16): “how many lively and original young voices faltered into silence or convention-driven cliché in later years, whose early work remains to be recovered or recuperated” (269)? Implicit in what Peterson and Robertson say is the very narrow focus a study like this almost inevitably takes. The young voices are still with us because they are, for the most part, young voices of privilege and young voices that matured into public voices that our culture has valued. In other words, the emerging study of juvenilia perpetuates a liberal humanist bias towards the cultural elite.

Not that this is so bad. We have to begin somewhere, and the Brontës, Carroll, Austen, and other luminaries have left us accessible material from their childhood and adolescence. To study this material is to give us some insight into the making of major authors, into family life at a certain time and in a certain place, and into the benefits of privilege. The Introduction to the book offers a general review of the contents of this volume, and Alexander and McMaster present a case for our considering juvenilia “a category of literature,” a genre (1, 2). Consequently, their concern is not only to study juvenile work as preparation for adult writing, but also to study juvenilia in relation to other juvenile work. In other words, the contributors to this volume respect the minds and abilities of children. Like philosopher Gareth Matthews, the contributors to this volume accept the premise that a certain age is not a prerequisite for authorship or for serious thinking. Some children, like some adults, can write. They can also take an interest in subjects as varied as family relationships, politics, and sexuality, and they can think about such subjects seriously. And what’s more, their interest in such subjects is more often than not unfettered by the constrictions of etiquette or convention.

Part One consists of four chapters. In the first of these chapters, Alexander surveys nineteenth-century juvenilia, and she suggests that such juvenilia “are a middle—and upper—class phenomenon.” Since we have no records of stories by working class children, Alexander concludes: “their imaginative life belonged chiefly to an oral tradition” (11). Such a conclusion strikes me as hasty despite Alexander’s assertion that the “means and leisure to read and write were the preserve of the middle- and upper- class child” (12). In any case, the young writers surveyed in this volume are the products of means and leisure. The writing they produce takes the form of letters home, private journals, and imitations of adult genres such as historical novels, romances, journalism, poetry, and drama. Although some of this writing is the product of individual meditation (journal writing, for example), much of it emanates from what Alexander calls “collaborative play” (15). For many Victorian middle-class children, play included acts of writing in imitation of adult writing. Indeed, imitation is the way of juvenilia: Austen imitated the epistolary novel, the Dodgson children imitated adult magazine writing, so too did the Stevens children, Mary Ann Evans imitated Scott and G. P. R. James, and so on. Imitation serves as practice, apprentice work, even while it initiates the young writer into the intricacies of intertextual play. Imitation also serves as a form of appropriation (17). Alexander’s survey of intertextual play among the young writers she mentions also serves to demonstrate the sophistication of the Victorian young reader. For example, Mary Arnold took for her models the work of “Bulwer Lytton, Charlotte Yonge, Elizabeth Gaskell, and

George Eliot”(18). Even younger children read major authors, indicating just how advanced Victorian upper-and middle-class children were in their ability to read.

Finally, Alexander points out that juvenile writing serves the young writer as a means of self-exploration. Not only does the young writer measure herself or himself against adults and both imitate and mock adult behaviour, but she also expresses herself without the sentimentalizing so often apparent in adult depictions of the young. Child writing is the product of close observation both of adult behaviour and of adult writing. If Alexander is correct about the oral-based literacy of working-class children, then she is so in the sense that children’s writing generally gives evidence of the textuality of both oral and written communication. Children show little interest in differentiating between oral and written text, and their written work easily makes use of both oral and written forms. What Alexander (and others in this volume) refers to as imitation often, very often, slides into parody. When the Dodgson children or the Stevens children create their family magazines, they do so gleefully making fun of adult conventions and pretensions. In her second essay in this volume, “Play and apprenticeship: the culture of family magazines,” Alexander argues that children’s writing is a form of play, and that in playing the child “is free to be creative and to use the whole personality without fear of censure” (30). In passing, she suggests that such creative play is a form of socializing in which adult forms and conventions “colonize” the child, while at the same time the child “is colonizing the adult world itself by remaking it in the image of self” (31). The question whether literature for the young colonizes young children or somehow liberates them from the colonizing intentions of the older generation here takes a turn precisely because we are now talking about children producing their own literature. However, the process of production by the young is not necessarily different from the process of production for the young. In imitating the literature they read or have read to them, children learn to participate in the institution of literature; they are interpellated. When imitation turns into parody, they are not necessarily any more subversive than when they merely imitate adult conventions. After all, the Dodgson family or the Stevens family, adults and children, participated in the juvenile literary activity, either directly or through supervision.

On the other hand, children do desire privacy, and the younger they are the less fully interpellated they are. The several treatments in this volume of the Brontë children’s creation of miniature worlds such as Glass Town and Angria note the tiny script the children used. The size of the little books and the minuteness of the writing were ways for the children, as Alexander notes, to exclude grown-ups (162). In a chapter on Charlotte Brontë, Alexander

argues that the marginal status of juvenile writing allows the child writer “to experience the adult world while at the same time challenging the ideologies it professes” (162). This dual aspect of child writing is perhaps nowhere more intensely presented than in Margaret Anne Doody’s chapter on Jane Austen’s juvenilia. The young Jane Austen in the 1790s is free from social constraint, or prior to such restraint taking hold. Doody remarks that this Austen manifests nothing “soft, auntly, or fusby” (101). Indeed, the early works by this young author show a decided Rabelaisian strain. They “point in directions in which their author was later not permitted to go” (103). They deal with matters children are not supposed to know about—most pointedly, sex. The progression of Jane Austen as author is from lively and audacious young parodist into careful and proper mature ironist. From the point of view of the creation of what Foucault calls the author function, a comparison of Austen and Amy Levy is instructive. Doody’s chapter on Austen illustrates the necessary taming of an author when contextual circumstances demand such taming. In the case of Levy, as apparent in the chapter on her by Naomi Hetherington, we have a young person raised in the milieu of first-wave feminism, and so Levy demonstrates at an early age a rebellion against the strictures of patriarchy, a rebellion sanctioned by the society into which she matures. As Hetherington puts it: “I map the inter-connection of the assimilated Jewish and feminist-oriented worlds of Levy’s girlhood as I hear her championing of ‘women’s rights,’ not *sotto voce*, but as a dominant strain in a chorus of other voices” (259). We might argue that Levy is interpellated into a particular social group just as Austen is interpellated into a different social group, only one happens to be politically progressive and the other politically conservative.

In other words, even young writers desire acceptance by the readers they most certainly envisage. Rachel M. Brownstein, in a chapter on Austen and Byron, discusses the young writer’s position between his or her models, the writers whom she or he imitates, and his or her readers. Brownstein suggests that in negotiating the way between models and readers, the young writer seeks to “create a sense of complicity” (123). Complicity strikes me as an appropriate word for us to describe the motive for writing. The writer seeks accomplices. Juliet McMaster, in a chapter on the epistemology of the child writer, notices the insistent occurrence of witnessing on the part of the child. Citing Henry James’s *What Maisie Knew*, McMaster suggests that “*seeing* is the one activity in which [Maisie] can gain a degree of agency” (52). Seeing is learning, and writing results from seeing. As long as writing remains secret, resistance to adult ideology is possible, but as soon as writing becomes an open secret, complicity enters. What this book might chronicle is the inevitable slide into complicity of the young writer.

In chapters on Elizabeth Barrett Browning by Beverly Taylor, Branwell Brontë by Victor A. Neufeldt, George Eliot by Juliet McMaster, Louisa May Alcott by Daniel Shealy, John Ruskin by David C. Hanson, Mary Augusta Ward by Gillian E. Boughton, and Amy Levy by Naomi Hetherington we have descriptions of young writers seeking the complicity of a reading public as they move from the secret sharing of juveniles to the desire for a public voice of the adult. Perhaps the most bracing narrative among these various narratives is that of John Ruskin who learned very young how to defy “his mother’s demands for method and closure” (204). Hanson’s chapter on Ruskin chronicles the young writer’s navigation of the evangelical strictures on precocity, and offers some hope that the young writer can successfully manage, in his writing, to overcome the overseeing eye of the parent. The downside to this is evident in the repercussions in Ruskin’s personal life; Hanson speculates that, “it is likely that the construction of Ruskin’s emergent sexuality was influenced by the conventional paradigm of precocity” (214). That such “ambiguous consequences of moderating the precocious child” are not inevitable is evident from the case of Robert Browning who emerged from a childhood similar to Ruskin’s less damaged than Ruskin (214).

Of the sixteen chapters in this book, Christine Alexander has written four and co-authored a fifth. Her voice rings clearest. And her chapter, “Defining and representing literary juvenilia,” is the book’s centerpiece. In this chapter, Alexander examines attitudes to juvenilia shaped by “different groups with control over juvenilia—the authors, their family and friends, professional critics and biographers” (70). The second part of the chapter considers how attitudes towards nineteenth-century juvenilia have influenced the way juvenilia “have been handled in the past” (70). Accordingly, the chapter begins with a review of the pejorative implications of the term “juvenilia.” It suggests or has suggested inferiority, immaturity, and simplicity. The term, Alexander points out, is “extra-textual,” and any definition must be “ageist” (72). But ageism here is descriptive, not evaluative. Alexander goes on to argue, calling on Virginia Woolf as authoritative source, “that juvenilia are not inferior literature” (73). They are experiments in identity-formation. Another way of putting this is for me to return to what I noted earlier and quote Alexander: “juvenilia reveal not just the maturation of the writer but her socialisation” (75). Turning to the editing of juvenilia, Alexander reviews previous editorial practices related to juvenilia, and then details the practices instituted by The Juvenile Press, a press begun in 1994 by Juliet McMaster, and now “based at the University of New South Wales in Sydney” (86). In passing, I might note that at times this chapter and the book as a whole reads like a detailed promotion for The Juvenile Press.

But undeniably Juliet McMaster and Christine Alexander are pioneers in the study of juvenilia, and The Juvenile Press serves the academic community as no other press does. Comparing Alexander's and McMaster's contributions to this volume with, say, the chapters by Shealy and Neufeldt, we can see how they take the early work of writers seriously as writing and not simply as apprentice work in which the aspiring writer learns her craft through imitation. They see imitation as a truly creative act, or at least as potentially creative. It need not be simple repetition. What this volume does is to highlight the importance of what children create. What we now need is a study of the relationship between literature by children and literature for children. Is the literature that adults create for children in any way similar to the literature children create for themselves? Or does the literature children ostensibly create for themselves actually target a different readership than does the literature written by adults for children? Can we define genres more precisely by comparing literature by children with literature for children? Or do categories break down when we make such comparisons?

Last words: this book is a valuable contribution to literary study, especially as it relates to literature for and by the young. It is provocative—well written and thoroughly researched. The annotated bibliography by Lesley Peterson and Leslie Robertson is invaluable. It lists scholarship about juvenilia and the major editions of nineteenth-century juvenilia. To refurbish a cliché, I will hail this book as seminal. I hope the seeds it scatters result in extended studies of juvenilia. We have, for example, the likes of Gordon Korman and S. E. Hinton, writers who began their careers while still in their teens. How do their early works compare with what we might hastily conclude is their “more mature” work? What other juvenilia lie waiting for discovery? And should we examine all those works by children who do not grow up to become writers? What of school anthologies or the kinds of books that collect children's stories such as those by Brian Sutton-Smith and others? *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf* is an important beginning to what promises to be a rich literary field—the study of juvenilia.

Rod McGillis